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Latvian Approach to the Environmental Issues in the Military Area and Unexploded Ordnance

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Introduction

Following 5 decades since the World War II Latvia being occupied sequentially by Nazi and Soviet military powers suffered much from their military presence causing and activating also environmental problems into the places of direct location of German and Soviet troops and their military camps.

Extremely high density of former Soviet military units and institutions in Latvia (approx. 700) caused the situation that a lot of dangerous explosives, anti-personnel mines, different emissions, damaged and defected ammunition, other hazardous materials are still polluting vast Latvian rural territories the clearance and neutralisation of whom still challenge the Government being unable to allocate resources sufficient to these needs. Also problems concerning polluted water and soil in former Soviet military sites are not solved yet, then the storage and neutralisation of hazardous waste including dangerous chemicals, petroleum based compounds, rocket fuel, huge stocks of municipal waste left by Soviet army units, polluted sites in Liepaja former military seaport area etc.

Description

Serious reasons for such endangered status of things are found into internal Latvian difficulties.

For instance, no sufficient legislative basis still exists regulating the treatment of polluted military territories and fixing the division of responsibilities between local authorities, central Government and defensive forces or interior institutions.

Also in many cases no territorial planning processed in the communities thus making obstacles to any well-expected practical clearance intentions. There are no special rules and regulations adopted for specific sectors, territories or otherwise defined areas, and Latvian army units have to follow in general the same environmental rules as civilians.

General environmental legislation consists of the umbrella law on Environmental Protection (1991), special laws on Air and Water Pollution, Waste Management (including hazardous and municipal waste), Land Use law, Nature Conservancy law, Natural Resources Taxation law and some others.

Newly established Latvian Army units mainly are stationed in the same sites left by the Russian army after its withdrawal from Latvia in 1994. Still the number of Latvian army is limited, and they occupy only a small part of the former Soviet military territories.

Major part of sites are given in charge of local municipalities for civilian re-use, and they all inherited the mentioned pollution problems.

At present mainly stocks of municipal waste are put in order, still no remediation activities concerning soils and waters are carried out. In some of the military sites there are certain investigations and assessment of pollution made by foreign experts.

Still, there are no special environmental management plans prepared for military sites and bases as well, and only some proposals of making them are initiated.

General Objectives

Major objectives for the Latvian Government and National Armed Forces when solving this problem are as follows:

First, to put in order, demine and treat the territory of all former Soviet military sites in Latvian territory.

Second, to make a necessary legislative background and instructions regulating environmental issues in military area.

Third, to make the environmental management plans for Latvian military bases, armed forces units and training institutions.

Fourth, to provide the Latvian armed forces at all command levels with a sufficient number of environmentally educated and trained managers, to establish training and education system for military environmental managers, to introduce the environmental subjects in the military education and training curricula for all Latvian military personell.

Fifth, to provide close co-operation of military authorities with local and national environmental protection institutions and authorities, to ensure the wide public involvement and participation into solving of environmental problems in military area and controlling of militaries.

Former Soviet Military Sites

The Ministry of Defence proposes the following framework for the implementation of the first goal - to put in order, demine and treat the territory of former Soviet military sites in Latvia.

First, it seems necessary to make the environmental safety auditing of former Soviet military sites. This could be done by involving of national and foreign experts, by making of necessary investigations, by general risk assessment, by making of pilot auditing projects in some of sites (e.g., Adazi military base) etc.

Next step would be the Environmental Impact Assesment of the sites. This includes prioritizing of the sites according to their status, more detailed investigations and planning of necessary scope of works.

Planning of necessary further organizational steps should include the pilot project in Cekule former Soviet military base where a lot of endangered munitions and other unexploded materials are still located.

Then, the elaboration of special Governmental regulation should be encouraged dividing the responsibilities between Central Government and local authorities in the treatment of former Soviet military sites. This would be the umbrella rule regulating the overall division of

responsibilities, and the more detailed regulations should follow, i.e., on social security of field engineers directly involved in de-mining etc.

Further the relevant instructions for military units should be made how to handle the environmental protection issues, also financial instructions etc.

Governmental umbrella Regulation on the environmental treatment of former Soviet military sites should be made by Ministry of Defence, still the National Armed Forces Staff would be responsible for the more detailed documents.

Local authorities are responsible for the territorial (development) planning in the polluted territories in order to evaluate the scope of necessary works. This could be encouraged by registering of those local communities which have any polluted military site in their territory, by making of their territorial development plans, by further actions planning and by making of at least 2-3 pilot projects until the year 2001.

Afterwards, there will be the time for making of concrete treatment (de-mining) projects, and this should be organized by involving of necessary experts and provision of projects planning in strong accordance to the territorial plans made by local community. Elaboration and adoption of projects also should include the pilot project case study.

Plans of activities when dividing institutional responsibilities should include wide institutional involvement on the basis of costs- and responsibilities sharing, elaboration of tailor-made action plans for each institution, exact agreements on timing and action plan case studies, as well as solution of funding issues while involving national budget, local communities and private resources, and foreign assistance or credits as well.

Personnel, training and equipment issues must be solved by appropriate personnel resources planning, by training of the personnel, by identifying of necessary equipment, facilities, devices etc. Then, the tenders for equipment supplies must be announced and institutional strengthening of National Armed Forces field engineers corps should be provided.

Any international assistance to this initiative is very welcomed.

Legislative Background

For the second goal - to make a national legislative background and military instructions regulating environmental protection issues in military area, the first step would be the elaboration of MoD Environmental Protection Strategy already in 1999, as well as MoD and NAF Action Plan.

The Ministry of Defence must also draft the Governmental Regulation on Environmental Protection in Latvian Armed Forces, as well as ensure the working out of the specific regulations, rules and orders on environmental protection in military area later issued officially by the Minister of Defence or by NAF Commander.

Among them the following specific rules should be at the top:

- 1) on social security of field engineers or other military personnel involved in de-mining and similar activities.
- 2) on water pollution prevention in NAF bases and during the military exercises.
- 3) on soil pollution prevention in NAF bases and during the military exercises.
- 4) on air pollution prevention in NAF bases and during the military exercises.
- 5) regulation on noise prevention issues.
- 6) on nature protection in military area.
- 7) on hazardous and municipal waste management in military bases.

This proposed legislative background should be described in more detailed way in the mentioned MoD Environmental Protection Strategy and/or Action Plan as the first and more challenging document.

In-service instructions and financial instructions on environmental protection issues in NAF units should follow the NAF environmental protection action plans.

Environmental Management Plans for Military Sites

The appropriate elaboration of environmental management plans for Latvian military bases, armed forces units and training institutions also should follow the rules and procedures envisaged and fixed in the MoD Environmental Protection Strategy. One of the next steps would be the joint environmental protection Action Plan, appropriately coordinated among MoD and NAF.

Generally, it means that first the relevant legal background should be provided, when collecting of information and making of environmental audits in order to promote and facilitate the faster adoption of the Governmental Regulation on Environmental Protection in Latvian Armed Forces. One of the milestones to this could be also the specific NAF Environmental Protection Action Plan and/or 2-3 local pilot action plans in some of the units.

Further, at least several special environmental protection programs in military area should be elaborated, e.g., military waste management program, soil and water pollution prevention program, etc., as well as the specific projects (for instance, 2-3 territorial pilot projects) will be of high importance.

Afterwards, the prior designing of these environmental management plans should begin, including pilot project in Adazi military base. Such institutions as NAF, MoD and the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development would be involved.

Environmental Education and Training in the Military Area

When being tasked to provide the Latvian National Armed Forces at all command levels with a sufficient number of environmentally educated and trained managers, to establish training and education system for military environmental managers in Latvia, to introduce the environmental subjects in the military education and training curricula for all Latvian military personell, the MoD should make the following steps.

First, it is necessary to establish a relevant training and education system for military environmental managers in NAF structures. To do that, it seems reasonable to develop further the curricula of National Defence Academy, and other higher educational institutions as well, in order to include the environment in all those military training and education programs and plans.

Also the relevant textbooks and other audio-visual training means should be provided, the wide use of Western know-how will be very welcomed, experienced instructors and trainers must be involved.

Training of trainers would be the next and very important stage in all the educational reforming process, not only in the National Defence Academy, but also in other military training centers. Training abroad and case studies making are the necessary milestones when following that way.

Generally speaking the environmental subjects must be introduced into education and training curricula for all Latvian military personell. Of course, in addition to this the necessary

material background in the educational institutions must be developed, training of trainers processed and a lot of practical field exercises and case studies or pilot projects made.

Next, the regular updating of the mentioned curricula and training means should start according to the most recent needs and international experience. Participation of military staff and trainers into international training events, exchange and mobility of staff, cadets and officers should become a permanent and welcomed process, and not merely in the National Defence Academy, but elsewhere.

Publicity of Military Environmental Activities

To provide close co-operation of Latvian military authorities with the local and national environmental protection institutions and authorities, to ensure the wide public involvement and participation into solving of environmental problems in military area and controlling of militaries - that should become the MoD goal already in the nearest future.

Wide public involvement and participation in the treatment actions, environmental programs and projects in former Soviet military bases would contribute much to that purposes. Including of public environmental awareness constraints into the MOD's drafted defence concepts, programs and projects on environmental issues, will ensure the relevant public information activities on a regular basis.

First public awareness constraints should be included already in the MoD's Environmental Strategy and action plans. Further, whilst making special campaigns, informing public and the environmental institutions on the proposed military activities and also on pollution prevention measures being undertaken, the MoD will involve local authorities, national and local environmental protection institutions into its practical projects on environmental treatment in these military sites.

Later this should be developed into the regular co-operative frameworks, especially when linking MoD, NAF Staff and units with the local public and authorities, and environmental bodies as well.

Ensuring of public and civilian control on Latvian armed forces concerning environmental pollution prevention and restoring of environmental status should be followed by rapid and in-time provision of the due information on military activities both on a regular basis and, of course, in case of any accident. This should be a permanent duty of MoD and NAF, as well as their units and institutions.

Present Challenges

Basic challenge for the Ministry of Defence when following that way is the lack of skilled and well-enough educated military personell who could deal actively with the above-mentioned environmental problems.

Next challenge is too low capacity of the present training and military education system, as well as the lack of appropriate training facilities.

Also the fact that at present Latvian defence system has no sufficient number of instructors and teachers who could teach on the environment, thus the Western know-how could be transferred to Latvia much more than presently.

Then, the lack of funds and suitable equipment still challenge the Latvian MoD when trying to deal with this scope of works. Legislative background should be provided as soon as

possible ensuring, among other things, the due social guaranties for the military personell dealing directly with the de-mining, etc.

Future Visions

According to the drafted MoD Environmental Strategy, first of all, any former Soviet military site in Latvian territory must be put in order, demined and treated. This is both the financial and legislative problem which must be solved as soon as possible.

Second, the Latvian military bases, army units and training institutions should act in strong accordance to the territorial development and environmental management plans elaborated by local communities. Process of elaboration of those plans must be encouraged and supported both by Governmental and defensive structures.

Third, Latvian armed forces at all command levels should have a sufficient number of well educated and trained managers dealing actively with environmental protection issues. This seems to be both the personnel policy and education problem.

Next, the military personell has to undergo certain environment related training, and it has to have a good general knowledge in the environmental protection field. There the relevant international support is very welcomed.

And the last, Latvian militaries have to co-operate more closely with the local and national environmental protection institutions and authorities, as well as to ensure the wide public participation, awareness and support. It seems evident that the capacity of the MoD and defence forces is not strong enough to solve these problems alone.

Environmental problems in the former Soviet military sites

High density of former Soviet military units and institutions in Latvia (approx. 700) caused the following problems:

- a lot of dangerous explosives, landmines, different emissions, damaged and defected ammunition, other hazardous materials left by Soviet Army in Latvian territory
- polluted water and soil in former Soviet military sites
- storage and neutralisation of hazardous waste including dangerous chemicals, petroleum based compounds, rocket fuel, huge stocks of municipal waste
- polluted sites in Liepaja former military seaport area etc.

Environmental problems in the former Soviet military sites

Internal Latvian difficulties:

- lack of Governmental allocations sufficient to the clearance and neutralisation of unexploded materials
- no sufficient legislative basis regulating the treatment of polluted military territories and fixing the division of responsibilities between local authorities, central Government and defensive forces or interior institutions
- in many cases no territorial planning processed in the communities
- lack of special rules and regulations adopted for specific sectors, territories or otherwise defined areas (Latvian army units have to proceed in general the same environmental rules as civilians)
- lack of special environmental management plans for military sites and bases (only some proposals of making them are initiated)

General environmental legislation in Latvia

1. The umbrella law on Environmental Protection (1991)

2. Special laws:

- Air and Water Pollution law
- Waste Management law
(including hazardous and municipal waste)
- Land Use law
- Nature Conservancy law
- Natural Resources Taxation law
- some others.

Responsibilities for the management of the former Soviet military sites

- Latvian Army units mainly are stationed in the same sites left by the Russian army after its withdrawal from Latvia in 1994
- the number of Latvian army units are limited, and they occupy only a small part of the former Soviet military territories
- major part of sites are given in charge of local municipalities for civilian re-use

Present status

- mainly stocks of municipal waste are put in order
- no remediation activities concerning soils and waters are carried out
- in some of military sites there are pilot investigations and assessment of pollution made by foreign experts

Major objectives

- to put in order, demine and treat the territory of former Soviet military sites in Latvian territory
- to make a national legislative background and instructions regulating environmental issues in military area
- to elaborate the environmental management plans for Latvian military bases, armed forces units and training institutions
- to provide the Latvian armed forces at all command levels with a sufficient number of environmentally educated and trained managers
- to establish training and education system for military environmental managers in Latvia
- to introduce the environmental subjects in the military education and training curricula for all Latvian military personell
- to provide close and constructive co-operation of Latvian military authorities with local and national environmental protection institutions and authorities
- to ensure the wide public involvement and participation into solving of environmental problems in military area and controlling of militaries

Proposed Activities to put in order the former Soviet military sites

I

First it is necessary to run an environmental safety auditing of former Soviet military sites:

- by involving national and foreign experts
- by making of necessary investigations and general environmental risk assessment
- by making of pilot auditing projects in some of sites (e.g., Adazi military base)

Institutions involved:

- National Armed Forces
- local authorities
- environmental protection authorities

Proposed Activities to put in order the former Soviet military sites

II

To make the environmental impact assessment of these sites:

- by prioritising of the sites according to their endangered status
- by detailed investigations and planning of necessary scope of works
- by planning of necessary further organisational steps
- by making pilot project in Cekule former Soviet military base already in years 1999-2000

Institutions responsible:

- national and local environmental protection authorities
- National Armed Forces field engineers

Proposed Activities to put in order the former Soviet military sites

III

To elaborate necessary Governmental regulations providing the division of responsibilities between the central Government and local authorities in the treatment of former Soviet military sites

- Governmental umbrella regulation regulating the division of responsibilities between the central Government and local authorities in the treatment of former Soviet military sites
- detailed regulations, i.e., on social security of field engineers directly involved in demining etc.
- instructions for military units how to handle the environmental protection issues
- financial instructions etc.

Institution responsible:

- Ministry of Defence

Proposed Activities to put in order the former Soviet military sites

IV

To provide the territorial (development) planning for the polluted territories

- by registering of local communities having polluted military sites in their territory and by indicating the presence or absence of territorial development plans
- by making of these plans and further actions planning
- by making first 2 - 3 pilot projects

Institutions responsible:

- local authorities
- Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development

Proposed Activities to put in order the former Soviet military sites

V

To elaborate the treatment (de-mining) projects for these territories based on their territorial development plans

- by involvement of experts and projects planning in strong accordance to the territorial plans made by local community
- by elaboration and adoption of those projects
- by making of pilot project case studies

Institutions responsible:

- local authorities
- armed forces field engineers

Proposed Activities to put in order the former Soviet military sites

VI

To elaborate the plans of activities, division of institutional responsibilities

- by provision of wide institutional involvement sharing the responsibilities
- by elaboration of separate action plans for each institution
- by agreements on timing
- by making of Action plan case study

Institutions responsible:

- National Armed Forces
- Ministry of Defence
- Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development
- local authorities

Proposed Activities to put in order the former Soviet military sites

VII

To solve funding issues when involving national budget, local communities and private resources, and foreign assistance or credits as well:

- by evaluating of existing funding possibilities and identifying of needs
- by preparation of expenditures lists, sending of requests to possible funding agencies
- by optimazing the financial planning
- by regular making of case studies

Institutions responsible:

- Ministry of Defence
- local authorities, etc.

Proposed Activities to put in order the former Soviet military sites

VIII

To ensure necessary personnel, training and equipment:

- by personnel resources planning
- by training of personnel
- by identifying of needed equipment, facilities, devices etc.
- by institutional strengthening of National Armed Forces field engineers corps

Institutions responsible:

- National Armed Forces
- Ministry of Defence, etc.

Proposed Activities to make the legislative background

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To elaborate the Governmental Regulation on Environmental Protection in Latvian Armed Forces:

- by making in parallel the MOD Environmental Protection Strategy
- by making MOD/NAF Environmental Protection Action Plan

Institutions responsible:

- National Armed Forces
- Ministry of Defence
- Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development

Proposed Activities to make the legislative background

II

To make the specific regulations, rules and orders on environmental protection in military area issued by Minister of Defence or NAF Commander

- On social security of field engineers or other military personnel involved in demining and similar activities
- On water pollution prevention in NAF bases and during the military exercises
- On soil pollution prevention in NAF bases and during the military exercises
- On air pollution prevention in NAF bases and during the military exercises
- On noise prevention issues
- On nature protection in military area
- On hazardous and municipal waste management in military bases

Institutions responsible:

- Ministry of Defence
- National Armed Forces

Proposed Activities to make the legislative background

III

To make the in-service instructions and financial instructions on environmental protection issues in NAF units

Institutions responsible:

- Ministry of Defence
- National Armed Forces Staff

Proposed Activities to make the environmental management plans for military bases, armed forces units and training institutions

I

In order to make the environmental management plans for Latvian military bases, armed forces units and training institutions, it is necessary:

- To elaborate the Ministry of Defence Environmental Protection Strategy already in the years 1999-2000

Institution responsible:

- Ministry of Defence

Proposed Activities to make the environmental management plans for military bases, units and training institutions

II

In order to make the environmental management plans for Latvian military bases, armed forces units and training institutions, it is necessary:

To elaborate the MOD/NAF Environmental Protection Action Plan:

- by making first the due legal background, including Governmental Regulation on Environmental Protection in Latvian Armed Forces
- by gathering of technical information
- by environmental auditing of military sites
- by making 2-3 local pilot action plans (at the units or base level) in 1999-2000

Institutions responsible:

- Ministry of Defence
- National Armed Forces Staff and units

Proposed Activities to make the environmental management plans for military bases, units and training institutions

III

In order to make the environmental management plans for Latvian military bases, armed forces units and training institutions, it is necessary:

To elaborate the specific environmental protection programs in military area. (e.g., military waste management program, water or soil pollution prevention program, etc.)

Institutions responsible:

- Ministry of Defence
- National Armed Forces Staff

Proposed Activities to make the environmental management plans for military bases, units and training institutions

IV

In order to make the environmental management plans for Latvian military bases, armed forces units and training institutions, it is necessary:

To elaborate specific projects:

- at least 2-3 territorial pilot projects in 1998-2000

Institutions responsible:

- Ministry of Defence
- National Armed Forces

Proposed Activities to make the environmental management plans for military bases, units and training institutions

V

In order to make the environmental management plans for Latvian military bases, armed forces units and training institutions, it is necessary:

To make the environmental management plans for Latvian military bases, armed forces units and training institutions

- by making first the pilot project in Adazi military base in 1999-2000

Institutions responsible:

- Ministry of Defence
- National Armed Forces
- Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development

Proposed Activities to enhance the environmental education and training in military area

I

In order:

- to provide the Latvian National Armed Forces at all command levels with a sufficient number of environmentally educated and trained managers,
- to establish training and education system for military environmental managers in Latvia,
- to introduce the environmental subjects in the military education and training curricula for all Latvian military personell:

it is necessary:

To establish the training and education system for military environmental managers in NAF structures

- by developing the curricula of National Defence Academy, other higher educational institutions
- by elaboration of necessary textbooks, other audio-visual training means
- by wide use of Western know-how, involvement of necessary instructors and trainers
- by training of trainers
- by specialists training abroad
- by making of case study in National Defence Academy in 1999-2002

Institutions responsible:

- Ministry of Defence
- National Armed Forces Staff
- National Defence Academy

Proposed Activities to enhance the environmental education and training in military area

II

In order:

- to provide the Latvian National Armed Forces at all command levels with a sufficient number of environmentally educated and trained managers,
- to establish training and education system for military environmental managers in Latvia,
- to introduce the environmental subjects in the military education and training curricula for all Latvian military personell:

it is necessary:

To introduce the environmental subjects in military education and training curricula for all Latvian military personell:

- by developing of necessary material background
- by training of trainers and instructors
- by practical field exercises
- by making of case studies and pilot projects in National Defence Academy in 1999-2002

Institutions responsible:

- Ministry of Defence
- National Armed Forces Staff
- National Defence Academy

Proposed Activities to enhance the environmental education and training in military area

III

In order:

- to provide the Latvian National Armed Forces at all command levels with a sufficient number of environmentally educated and trained managers,
- to establish training and education system for military environmental managers in Latvia,
- to introduce the environmental subjects in the military education and training curricula for all Latvian military personell:

it is necessary:

To ensure the regular updating of the mentioned curricula according to the most recent needs:

- by participation of military staff and trainers into international training events
- by exchange and mobility of staff, cadets and officers

Institution responsible:

- National Defence Academy

Proposed Activities to enhance the publicity of military environmental activities

I

In order:

- to provide close co-operation of military authorities with local and national environmental protection institutions and authorities,
- to ensure the wide public involvement and participation into solving of environmental problems in military area,
- to keep the civilian control on militaries,

it is necessary:

To provide the wide public involvement and participation in the treatment actions, environmental programmes and projects in former Soviet military bases:

- by including of Public Military Environmental Awareness Raising constraints into all MOD defence concepts and programs and projects,
- by public information activities on regular basis,
- by special campaigns
- by including public awareness constraints already into MOD Environmental Strategy and Action Plan for the years 1999-2008

Institutions responsible:

- Ministry of Defence
- National Armed Forces Staff and units

Proposed Activities to enhance the publicity of military environmental activities

II

In order:

- to provide close co-operation of military authorities with local and national environmental protection institutions and authorities,
- to ensure the wide public involvement and participation into solving of environmental problems in military area,
- to keep the civilian control on militaries,

it is necessary:

To involve the local authorities, national and local environmental protection authorities in practical projects on environmental treatment activities in military sites

- by regular co-operation

Institutions responsible:

- Ministry of Defence
- National Armed Forces Staff and units

Proposed Activities to enhance the publicity of military environmental activities

III

In order:

- to provide close co-operation of military authorities with local and national environmental protection institutions and authorities,
- to ensure the wide public involvement and participation into solving of environmental problems in military area,
- to keep the civilian control on militaries,

it is necessary:

To ensure the public and local authorities control on Latvian armed forces concerning also environmental pollution prevention and restoring of polluted environmental status

- by provision of information on a regular basis and in case of accidents

Institutions responsible:

- Ministry of Defence
- National Armed Forces

Future Visions - The Way Ahead

- All former Soviet military sites in Latvian territory are put in order, demined and treated
- Latvian military bases, army units and training institutions are acting in strong accordance to the environmental management plans of the territories they are stationed on
- Latvian armed forces at all command levels have a sufficient number of well educated and trained managers dealing actively with environmental protection issues
- Military personell have undergo a certain training and have a good general knowledge in the environmental protection field,
- Latvian militaries have close co-operation with local and national environmental protection institutions and authorities

Major needs

- Skilled personell
- Training and training facilities
- Instructors and Western know-how
- Funds
- Equipment
- Legislative background
- Social guaranties for the military personell